UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/C.7/1991/L.4/Add.2
3 April 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
Twelfth session
25 March-4 April 1991
Agenda item 13

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE AT ITS TWELFTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Ioan BARAC (Romania)

Chapter III

WATER RESOURCES: PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAR DEL PLATA ACTION PLAN (Item 4)

1. The Committee considered item 4 of its agenda at its 3rd and 4th meetings, on 27 March 1991. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on strategies and measures for the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan in the 1990s (E/C.7/1991/8).

2. The representative of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs indicated that the report was the result of extensive work carried out through the ACC Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources. In effect, it was a summary of regional studies carried out on critical issues in the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan, with the financial support of UNDP and the active participation of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development, the regional commissions, WHO, WMO, UNESCO, and UNEP. Issues covered related to water resources assessment, water quality, water for sustainable agricultural development, water resources management, and the need for national capacity-building with regard to institutions and human resources development. On drinking water supply and sanitation, the report summarized the findings and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session on the achievements of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990) (A/45/327); the outcome of the Global

Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation for the 1990s, held in New Delhi in September of 1990, as contained in the New Delhi Statement; and the contents of General Assembly resolution 45/181. While providing recommendations for action concerning each of those issues, the report to the Committee laid emphasis on the need for bringing about an integrated approach to the management of water as a finite and fragile resource.

3. The representative of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development provided the Committee with additional information concerning the background documentation to the report of the Secretary-General. As a result of the regional studies, a report on water resources assessment had been prepared by WMO and UNESCO. Similarly, FAO had prepared reports on water for agriculture and on an international action programme on water and sustainable agricultural development. A report on water quality issues had also been submitted by WHO and UNEP, while the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development, in cooperation with the regional commissions, had presented several reports on planning and management issues. With regard to capacity-building, UNDP had commissioned a consultant report which would be the background document to a symposium on the subject to be held in Delft, the Netherlands, in June 1991. Copies of those documents were provided to the members of the Committee as background documents.

4. The representative of UNDP, on behalf of the Chairman of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, stated that Council's mission was to enhance collaboration among developing countries and external support agencies, and that its goals were as follows: to provide a forum for sector professionals to identify, review and seek consensus on key sector issues, and to ensure wide-spread communication of the results; to alert members to opportunities for more efficient use of resources; to increase awareness of the need for intensified effort to expand sustainable coverage and effective use during the 1990s; to promote and enhance collaboration at the country level; and to stimulate the adoption of more harmonious policies, strategies and programmes. The membership of the Council is open to sector professionals in national sector agencies of developing countries and to external support agencies active in the water supply and sanitation sector. The UNDP representative also gave a brief description of issues related to capacity-building, as contained in the background document on the subject, and of activities of the joint UNDP/World Bank programme on water supply and sanitation and the UNDP's Programme for the Promotion of the Role of Women in Water and Environmental Sanitation Services.

5. The representative of WMO described the process involved in the preparation of the background document on water resources assessment as a result of the regional studies and discussed issues and conclusions arising from those studies. In addition, he provided detailed information on preparations for the International Conference on Water and the Environment, to be held in Dublin, in January 1992, which WMO was convening on behalf of the organizations of the United Nations system as part of the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Similarly, the representative of FAO described the process involved in the preparation of the report on the regional studies on water for agriculture and the international action programme on water and sustainable agricultural development. He also provided information about relevant activities of FAO.

6. The representative of INSTRAW stated that in developing countries women were usually affected primarily by problems arising from shortages of water and land degradation. Consequently, women needed to be increasingly involved in the protection and conservation of water resources and in the provision of water supply and sanitation services. The crucial role of women in various aspects of water supply and sanitation was recognized fully during the Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation for the 1990s, held in New Delhi, and at meetings of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council and the Steering Committee for Water Supply and Sanitation.

7. Representatives of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) provided information on the activities of their respective organizations. The representative of ECLAC drew the attention of the Committee to proposals on fresh-water quality and supply contained in the Tlatelolco Platform on Environment and Development, adopted by the ministers and representatives of the Latin American and Caribbean countries, members of ECLAC that participated at the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

8. During the ensuing discussion, delegations provided information on their national experiences and expressed their appreciation for the comprehensive nature of the analysis and proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report and for the extensive background documentation prepared through the ACC Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources. Some delegations emphasized the importance of the concept of the integrated management of water as a finite and fragile resource and the need for an integrated approach to land and water management. A number of delegations also stressed the need to develop strategies and action plans at the global, national and river-basin levels - and also at the local and community levels - and the need for the participation of all interests concerned - in particular, that of women - in the decision-making process. In dealing with issues of water environment, the need for more comprehensive studies of the geological environment, including the impact of mining and industrial activities on water quality was cited, as these data could provide a more reliable basis for further development planning. Some delegations also emphasized the need to intensify technical cooperation activities and technical cooperation among developing countries.

9. Some delegations expressed support for the International Conference on Water and the Environment, to be held in Dublin in January 1992, affirming the vital importance of water as an economic good and a finite and fragile resource. Some delegations expressed the view that the Conference should aim at developing guidelines and time-frames to enable Governments to formulate action plans for integrated water resources development and management as well as international action programmes. They stressed the need for an action-oriented outcome of the Dublin Conference as contributions to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and urged the active participation of Governments in the preparatory process of that Conference. Delegations called upon the Inter-Agency Steering Committee for the Conference to take fully into account the views expressed by Governments throughout its preparatory process.